



South Gloucestershire and Stroud Academy Trust (SGSAT)

Complaints Policy

**If you would like this document in an alternate format
Please contact the SGS-GS Human Resources Department**

Policy and Procedure Prepared by:	Moira Foster-Fitzgerald
Job Title/Role:	Chief Group Services Officer
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Approved by:	SGS-AT Board of Trustees
Date:	12 July 2017

Mandatory Initial Equality and Diversity Impact Screening

Main aim and purpose of the policy:	This policy explains how a complaint can be made and how SGSAT will respond to it				
Is this policy (or its constituent parts) relevant to a general equality duty? (please tick)	This policy development will assist in the elimination of unlawful discrimination and/or harassment of identified groups?	Implementation of this policy will promote equal opportunities for identified groups?	Implementation of this policy will promote positive attitudes and participation between groups?	Implementation of this policy will promote good relations between groups?	
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Race or Ethnicity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Marriage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Pregnancy/ Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Carers/ Care givers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Persons in care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Specify any groups for which there is evidence or reason to believe that some groups or individuals could be affected differently:					
None					
How much evidence is there:	None	A little	Some	A lot	
Is there any concern that the policy may operate in a discriminatory way?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	None	A little	Some	A lot	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Assessed relevance to equality (tick one row only)	High	Med	Low	None	Brief reason for this assessment
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Gender Reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Race or Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Religion or Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Marriage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Pregnancy/ Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Carers/ Care givers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
What is the next step? (tick one only)	What priority level is this policy?			Has the Policy been sent for Full EQIA, or do you believe the policy should have a Full EQIA?	
	High <input type="checkbox"/>	Medium <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Low <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>I am satisfied that an initial screening has been carried out on this policy/procedure and a full Impact Assessment is not required</i>					
Completed by: Moira Foster-Fitzgerald Position: Chief Group Services Officer Date: June 2016					

SGS Academy Trust Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. SGSAT comprises academies, free and studio schools and UTCs - for ease of reference, they are referred to generically as 'schools' throughout this document.
- 1.2. The term 'Principal' is used throughout this document to refer to a school senior leader (e.g. Headteacher, Associate Headteacher, Associate Principal, Group Principal).
- 1.3. At SGSAT all the staff are dedicated to providing all students with the best possible education and we will aim to care properly for their health, safety and welfare at all times.
- 1.4. We are committed to working closely with parents/carers and believe that by each of us carrying out our particular responsibilities, we will help the students to gain the most from their time with the SGSAT.
- 1.5. We recognise, however, that sometimes things go wrong, and parents/carers or members of the public need to raise a concern. This policy explains how you can make a complaint and how we will respond to it. We take your right to make a complaint seriously and your child can expect not to be treated differently because you have made a complaint.
- 1.6. The SGSAT and schools within it are clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the number that develop into formal complaints. Concerns should be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in anyway undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally.

2. Principles

- 2.1. An effective complaints procedure will:
 - encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
 - be easily accessible and publicised
 - be simple to understand and use
 - be impartial
 - be non-adversarial
 - allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
 - ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
 - respect people's desire for confidentiality

- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- provide information to the SGSAT Executive and Board of Trustees so that services can be improved.

3. Dealing with complaints

3.1. Informal procedures:

3.1.1. When a problem arises, we will try to resolve it on an informal basis at first.

3.1.2. You can contact the school reception directly and ask who would be the best person to speak with about your concern. You can arrange for him/her to phone you back or make an appointment.

3.2. We can help you more quickly if you tell us:

3.2.1. What is your main concern?

3.2.2. How would you like the school to help?

3.2.3. What would you like to happen after you have told the school your concern(s)?

3.3. We may need time to investigate your concern or to discuss it with staff.

3.4. We aim to respond to your concern within three working days and let you know what the outcome is, or what we will do next.

3.5. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the informal stage, you can make a formal complaint.

4. Formal procedures

4.1. Formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and you remain dissatisfied and wish to take the matter further.

4.2. Each school within the SGSAT will have a nominated Complaints Officer who will be a member of the senior leadership team. They have responsibility for the operation and management of the SGSAT complaints procedure within that school and will lead on investigating the complaint. If the complaint refers to the Complaints Officer the Principal will investigate the complaint.

4.3. To make a formal complaint, you will need to put your complaint in writing. You can write to the Principal directly or ask the school's reception for a complaints form.

4.4. We will log your complaint and will write to you to let you know we have received it within three working days. We may be able to tell you how we have resolved your complaint in our response.

- 4.5. If we need more time to investigate or to call a meeting, we will let you know.
- 4.6. We aim to resolve all formal complaints within five working days.
- 4.7. If your complaint is about the Principal, we will tell them and send your complaint to the Chair of Governors.
- 4.8. At each stage, the person investigating the complaint (the Complaints Officer), should ensure that they:
 - 4.8.1. establish what has happened so far, meet with you or contact you (if unsure, or further information is necessary)
 - 4.8.2. clarify what you feel would put things right
 - 4.8.3. interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
 - 4.8.4. conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
 - 4.8.5. keep notes of the interview(s).
- 4.9. At each stage in the procedure the school will consider ways to resolve a complaint.
- 4.10. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part.
- 4.11. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:
 - 4.11.1. an apology
 - 4.11.2. an explanation
 - 4.11.3. an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better. (Please note: an admission that the SGSAT could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.)
 - 4.11.4. an assurance that the event complained of will not recur
 - 4.11.5. an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
 - 4.11.6. an undertaking to review SGSAT policies in light of the complaint.
- 4.12. We will aim to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred in order to create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.
- 4.13. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the formal stage, you can ask for a review by a panel of the school's governors within ten working

days from the date of the school's final communication to you about the formal investigation.

5. Review stage (panel hearing)

- 5.1. To begin the review stage, write to the Chair of Governors with details of your complaint and ask for a hearing.
- 5.2. The Chair will gather a panel of at least two Governors who are not directly associated with the complaint and an independent person who is not involved in the management and running of the school and invite you to the hearing to discuss your complaint.
- 5.3. Notification of the proposed date of the hearing will normally be made within 5 working days. The hearing will normally take place within fifteen working days of the Chair receiving your request.
- 5.4. You will be given a minimum of 5 working days notice for the date of the hearing.
- 5.5. You can bring a friend or family member with you for support if you wish.
- 5.6. At the hearing, the panel will, in general:
 - 5.6.1. Explain the purpose of the hearing and the procedure;
 - 5.6.2. Invite you to explain your complaint and ask you further questions;
 - 5.6.3. Invite the Complaints Officer to explain how he/she handled your complaint;
 - 5.6.4. Question any witnesses.
- 5.7. After listening to all parties, the panel will make a decision. The panel will tell you (the complainant) in writing about its decision within five working days of the meeting.
- 5.8. The panel will also make available a copy of the findings and recommendations to the Principal, the LGB and Trust Board, and to the person complained about (where relevant)
- 5.9. We will keep all letters, e-mails, statements and records of the complaint confidential, unless the Secretary of State for Education, Ofsted or another external party that may be entitled asks to review them.

6. After the review stage

- 6.1. The decision of the Governor Panel is final. However, you can contact the Education Funding Agency if you are still not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint. This is an online service, the link is below:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolperformance/school-complaints-form>

- 6.2. You may complain to Ofsted if you think a school isn't run properly and needs inspecting at:

<https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/onlinecomplaints>

- 6.3. You can only complain to Ofsted if you have already followed the school's complaints procedure.

7. Serial complaints

- 7.1. SGSAT takes complaints very seriously. However, there are occasions when the system is abused by those wishing to cause a nuisance. Unnecessary repeated complaints waste management time and resources that would be better spent on students' learning.
- 7.2. If repeated complaints are raised that essentially cover a matter that has already been considered or (with only very minor differences) the complaint will be referred to the relevant stage of the complaints process. If the process has been exhausted we will advise that they we not willing to enter into further correspondence on the matter unless new information comes to light.
- 7.3. Similarly, repeated but different complaints from the same person will be treated on their own merits unless the matters are considered trivial - at which point we will attempt to manage these through informal means only and note subsequent trivial complaints.

8. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- 8.1. The law requires us to handle complaints made in the EYFS in certain ways and to let you know about them.
- 8.1.1. Any written complaint about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days.
- 8.1.2. We will keep a record of complaints and their outcomes made in the EYFS for three years.
- 8.1.3. If a parent/carer believes that the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements they may contact Ofsted directly at Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD, 0300 123 1231.
- 8.1.4. We must provide Ofsted, on request, a written record of all complaints made during any specific period, and the actions we took to resolve them.